lives of chiefs.(1)

The chief's council and court

It has been noted that there is a chiefdom council responsible for electing the chief or deposing him, and for sitting with him in law cases. The composition of this council has not been clearly described.(2)

The Sub-chief

The chiefdom(3) was made up of a number of sub-chiefdoms called *otumbu* (sing. *etumbu*); Bailundu had about 200 *otumbu*, each of which had from 3 to more than 300 villages, while a number of the larger *otumbu* were themselves made up of smaller ones. About 20 *otumbu* were ruled by members of the chiefly family, including heirs apparent or expectant, and the chief's wife *(inakulu)* had also her own sub-chiefdom.(4) Others were ruled by court officials not of royal birth, who sometimes themselves established dynasties, others again by dynasties native to the respective regions, or at least dynasties longer resident in the area than the chiefly family. Villages of sub-chiefs, like those of chiefs, are known as *olombale*. Most of the *otumbu* are still recognised, and the sub-chiefs have retained more of their old functions than have the chiefs, and have in addition been given new functions. They as well as village headmen are required to assist in assessing and collecting native tax,(5) and also in recruiting labour for government work and for contracts. In some areas they receive in return the remission of their own taxes. On the dancing floor of most of their *olombale* cases are still heard, judgments given and fines received, although such judgments are not officially recognised or allowed by the European authorities.(6)

LAW

Courts

Very little information is available. We are told that certain disputes, e.g. concerning inheritance, are settled within the *oluina*;(7) that in the village cases are tried by a council which apparently consists of the section-heads under the leadership of the village headman;(8) and that these village courts continue to function; that certain cases (unspecified) are still unofficially heard in the courts of the sub-chiefs; and that prior to European occupation the paramount chief's decision was final.

(1) Ibid., p.23. But chiefs were treated with respect; Hambly (1934, p.214) notes that the ancient custom was for commoners to fall on their knees when greeting a chief, and today this still applies to women and children although less often to men.
(2) See Serpa Pinto, 1881, p.167.
(3) Most writers use "kingdom" and "king"; "chief" when used here without qualification refers always to the paramount chief of one of the 22 chiefdoms.
(4) Magyar, 1851, pp.389f, also quoted by Childs, op.cit., p.24.
(5) The amount of the tax levied on all males from 16 years is now Ags. 200,000 annually. As noted by Childs (p.215-6), it has been steadily increasing. Opportunities for earning are comparatively small in Angola, not now for lack of work, but because of "contract labour" required of all males in addition to taxes. Payment for "contract labour" is considerably below current wages, and it is a great hindrance to productive agricultural activities. (Childs, personal communication)
(6) Childs, op.cit., pp.24-5.
(7) Hambly, (2) 1934, p.200.
(8) See above, p.29.